

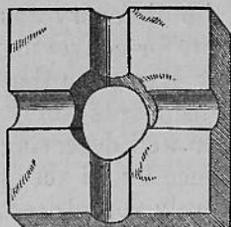
DISCOVERY OF AN ANCIENT CONDUIT AT ST. SIDWELL'S,  
NEAR EXETER.

DURING the early part of the year 1858, the discovery was accidentally made of a very ancient conduit, for conveying water from some springs in the vicinity of Exeter to that city and to some of the ecclesiastical establishments there. The curious details of its construction appear well deserving of being placed on record, more especially since by an act of wanton Vandalism, which cannot be too severely reprobated, all vestiges of this unique *castellum aquæ* have been destroyed. The locality was named anciently "Hedwyllmede," and is situated in the parish of St. Sidwell, in the county of the city of Exeter, but without the walls of the city, and about half a mile from the east gate.

St. Sidwell, or St. Sativola, as she is called in all Latin documents, was patron saint of the church of the parish in which the sources are. The springs rise through a red sandstone rock; the most copious of them was conveyed into a leaden stand-pipe soldered into a large disc of lead ten feet in diameter, and more than three inches in thickness. This disc rested on a circular platform, measuring six feet four inches in diameter, constructed of two layers of red volcanic stones, probably from the Killerton quarries, every stone channelled on its under side, and placed in five concentric circles around the opening into the base of the stand-pipe, forming also six or eight radiated cross-channels. The stones were kept firmly in their places, and the disc of lead flat upon them, by a bed of clay six feet in depth, firmly puddled down, about twenty feet in diameter, and at a depth of rather more than twenty feet from the general surface of the adjacent ground. The purpose of the numerous little channels in the stone basement appears to have been for regulating the flow into the stand-pipe, as well as collecting the water on all sides.

A similar construction was formed, but with one layer of stone only, over a second less copious spring within the same bed of clay, and the water was conveyed by a leaden pipe

into the first mentioned stand-pipe. This pipe was soldered into a leaden disc five feet in diameter, resting upon a platform of stones of one layer only, each stone channelled on its under surface in like manner as has been already described. The centre stone only has been preserved; it has four channels, which open into the centre aperture, as shown in the annexed wood-cut.



Central stone of the small Platform. fig. O.

A somewhat similar arrangement, it may be remembered, was noticed at the Holy Well, Malvern Wells, by the late Rev. F. Dyson, and has been figured in this Journal, vol. xii. p. 83.

About twenty-five feet distant from the larger spring was a very ancient square well of stone, seven feet six inches deep (fig. H. in the diagram), built over a third spring, the water from which was conveyed by a leaden pipe (L.) through the puddled clay into the other source beneath the stone platform. This well was covered with heavy elm plank, and although on lower ground than that where the cistern stood, it was sufficiently above the base of the stand-pipe to permit the flow of the water, and appears to have been taken advantage of when the remarkable works above described were constructed. It was most probably this well which gave the name to the meadow, and was the scene of the martyrdom: the masonry appeared to be of very remote antiquity. At the top of the stand-pipe first described, was placed a cistern, enclosed in a small stone arched building, from which the water flowed to the conduits in the city originally, and until the year 1836. The annexed diagram shows a section of these curious works, and may serve to render this description intelligible. Under the largest stone platform, on the sand-rock, was found a brass coin of the Emperor Nero, in perfect preservation. The legend around the head on the obverse is as follows: IMP. NERO. CAESAR. AVG. P. MAX. T. R. P. P. P.; reverse, a winged figure of Victory, VICTORIA AUGUSTI.

In making deep cuttings in January, 1858, for a railway in course of formation through the locality, the very curious constructions of the ancient works have been brought to light.

Mr. Dawson, an engineer resident at Exeter, was fortunately enabled to make plans and sections with accuracy, before the

whole of this extremely interesting conduit was most ruthlessly swept away by the railway contractors. We are indebted to him for the diagrams which accompany this notice.

St. Sativola is believed to have been a British lady of noble birth, born at Exeter, and contemporary with St. Winfrid or Boniface, of Crediton, in the middle of the eighth century. In the Martyrology of Exeter Cathedral, her festival is thus entered: "Augusti 2, In Britannia foras murum civitatis Exonie, Sancte Sativole virginis et martyris." In Leland's Itinerary it is stated that her father's name was Benna, and that after his death she was beheaded by a mower (*fæniseca*) one of his servants, near a well in Hedwyllmede, at the instigation of her stepmother, who coveted her possessions.<sup>1</sup> She had a brother named Bana, and three devout sisters: St. Juthwara, who was killed by Bana, through the malicious counsels of her stepmother; St. Eadwara; and St. Wilgitha. The legend of St. Juthwara is given by Capgrave.

There are several notices in early documents of legacies to keep this well in repair;<sup>2</sup> and mention occurs of the "Tumba Sancte Sativole," in the adjacent church.

John de Doulys, by will, dated Tuesday after the Feast of St. Luke, 1267, left, for the repair and maintenance of St. Sidwell's Well, one acre, called Bromeacre, and half an acre called Stokisland, which latter was about forty-five feet from the well towards the north.

In the east window of the choir of the cathedral at Exeter, there is a painting of St. Sativola in a black dress; the aureole of martyrdom is seen around her head; in her left hand she holds a scythe, and at her right side is a well with a stream of water flowing from it.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Leland, Itin. vol. iii. fol. 34, 35; third Edition.—William of Worcester gives the following notice of this saint: "Sancta Sativola, virgo canonizata, jacet in ecclesia Sancti Volæ (*sic*) civitatis Exoniæ ultra pontem orientalem."—Itinerarium ed. Nasmyth, p. 91. See further in the History of Exeter, by the Rev. G. Oliver, D.D., p. 155.

<sup>2</sup> William Hodel, as stated by Dr. Oliver, bequeathed on March 7, 1399, monies for maintaining the lights, "ad tumbam Sancte Sativole;" and Philip

Courtour, May 6, 1421, makes a bequest "instaurō tumbæ Sancte Sativole."

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Oliver, Hist. of Exeter, *ut supra*, observes that the scythe and well may be a rebus on her name. Sometimes she is represented holding her head in her left hand, as on the sculptured capitals in Exeter Cathedral, to show that she was beheaded; sometimes she holds a book. See the useful Manual of Emblems of Saints, by the Very Rev. F. C. Husenbeth, D.D.

The works lately destroyed were very probably constructed at the latter end of the twelfth century, or early in the thirteenth. In 1226, the well is mentioned in a document preserved in the Cartulary of St. Nicholas's Priory, Exeter fol. 139 : "Carta Serlonis, decani S. Petri de Exon. et capituli de tercia parte aque fontis Sancte Sativole ; teste Hylario Albo tunc majore Exon." &c. The fountain of St. Sativola was therefore evidently well known at that period ; Hilary White was mayor of Exeter 1226-27.

On the 3rd May, 1346, the Dean and Chapter conveyed the stream to an inclosed building in the Cathedral yard, from whence it branched into three channels : one for the use of the members of the Cathedral within the close ; one for the City ; and the third for St. Nicholas's Priory : the City and the Priory paying each eight shillings a-year to the Chapter for the water.

In the Chartulary of St. John's Hospital at Exeter, fol. 86, there is an extract from a book given to Richard Hylle, Prior of the said Hospital, by Roger Holande, Esq., A.D. 1498, and which had formerly belonged to Henry Lange, the procurator of the Hospital rents, as follows :—

"In Saynte Sydwylle is Paroche, ther as she was byhedded, ys a well, and the close that lyeth nexte aboff directely is called and named Hedwyllmede."

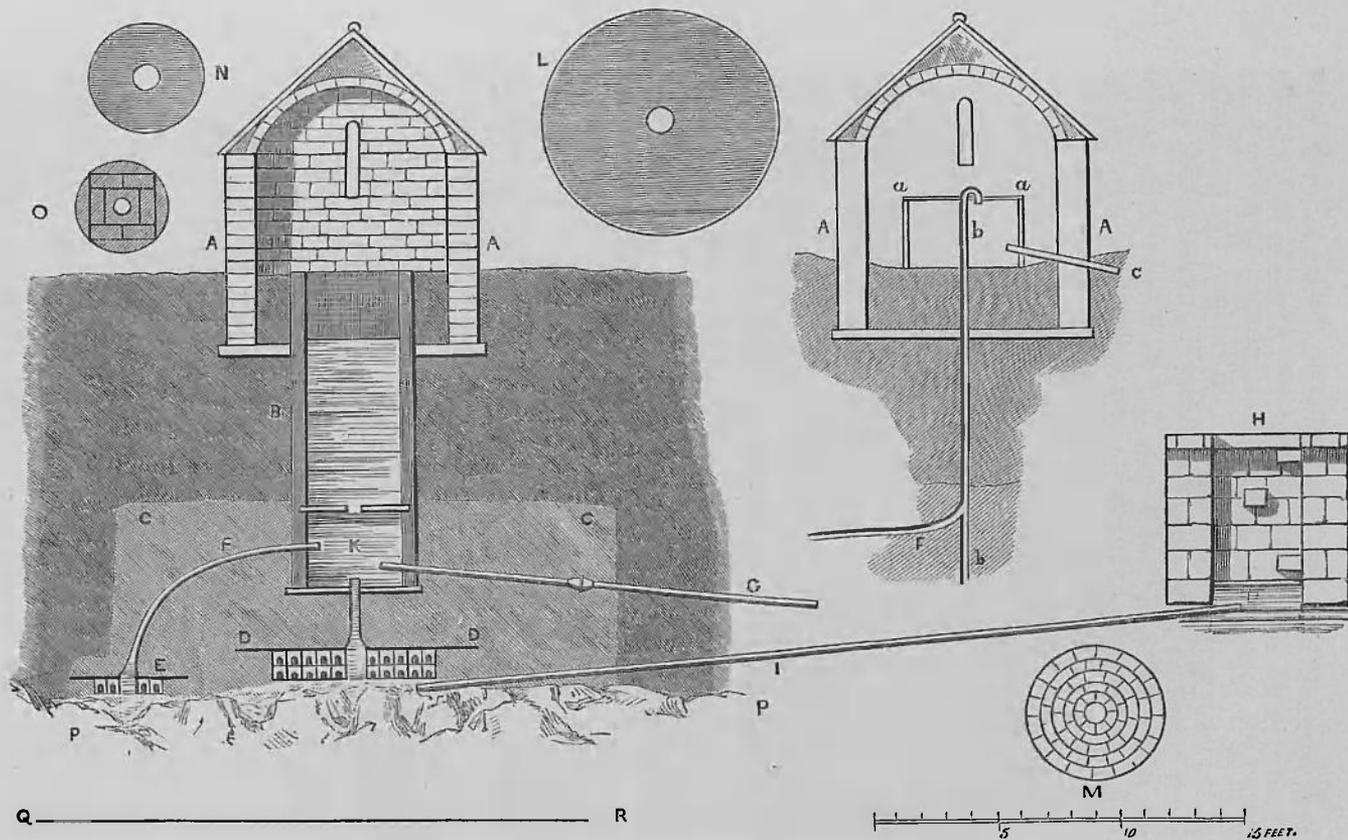
And subsequently the following passage occurs :—

"The Prior of St. John's and his Brothers haff moste grounde yn that Hylde or close, and they be bownde to repayre the wyllle."

In the fabric Rolls of the Cathedral for the years 1419-20, is found a collection presented to the church by the mayor and citizens of Exeter, "pro emendatione piparum fontis Beati Petri Exon ;" and the same Rolls for 1437 and 1438 set forth a considerable expense for stones for the wall made at Longbrooke for the safe keeping of the pipes. The Longbrook was supplied by the waters drawn from the lands adjacent to the above named springs.

The water continued to flow from these springs to the localities indicated in 1226, until the total destruction of the above described curious works by the railway company in the early part of the year 1858.

In the year 1836, some improvements were carried out by forming a well of a larger capacity than the ancient cistern.



Ancient Wells and Conduit at Hedwylmede in the Parish of St. Sidwells, near Exeter; destroyed 1858.

From a survey by Mr. N. Dawson.

This well measured three feet six inches in diameter, and thirteen feet in depth ; the average depth of water in it being ten feet. The engineer does not appear, however, to have perforated the puddled clay as low as the leaden disc, but to have rested the new brick-work on an oak platform, three inches thick, placed on the clay about three feet above the leaden disc, that being a level which would supply more copiously his new pipes, and give by the size of the well a much larger body of water in the reservoir. The ancient stand-pipe which originally ascended into the cistern, and probably measured fifteen to eighteen feet in length, was cut off just above the oak platform. These recent constructions are more clearly to be understood by examining the accompanying diagram.

As there appears to have been no necessity for carrying the railway cutting immediately over these springs, it is much to be regretted that any body of speculators should have the power of wantonly destroying works which served to indicate a high degree of scientific knowledge at so remote a period as the twelfth or thirteenth century ; causing at the same time extreme inconvenience to those who enjoyed the use of the water supplied by this remarkable conduit.

CHARLES TUCKER.

#### EXPLANATION OF THE DIAGRAMS.

- A. A. Stone building over the well, 11 ft. 6 in. by 10 ft., its foundations resting on an oak platform. It was rebuilt, in 1836, on the original site.
- B. Brick well ; diameter 3 ft. 6 in., depth 13 ft.
- C. C. Puddled clay ; depth about 6 ft., 10 feet thick around the well, and resting on the red sand-stone rock.
- D. D. Circular disc of lead ; diameter 10 ft. ; into the centre of which a stand-pipe is soldered, conveying the water into the well : the disc rests on a platform of stones, in two layers, diameter 6 ft. 4 in., with radiating and concentric channels.
- E. Second spring, covered by a lead disc ; diameter 5 ft., with a pipe (r.) soldered into it, connecting it with the well (B). The disc rests on a platform of stone, of one layer, with channels on the under surface.
- G. Iron service-pipe, laid down in 1836, conveying the water to the Cathedral Yard.
- H. Ancient square stone well, depth 7 ft. 6 in., covered with elm plank.
- I. Pipe, connecting the well with the spring and well (B).
- K. Remaining portion of the original stand-pipe, cut off in 1836.
- L. The leaden disc, covering the principal spring, as shown in section at D. D.
- M. Platform of Broadclyst stone, laid in five concentric circles, in two layers, the stones channeled on their under surfaces. Upon this platform the leaden disc rests.
- N. Leaden disc, covering the smaller spring, and resting on a stone platform (o).
- P. P. Red sand-stone rock, from which the springs issue forth. A coin of Nero found here.
- Q. R. Level of the railway, constructed 1858.
- a. a. Position of the original cistern, destroyed in 1836.
- b. b. Ancient stand-pipe, ascending into the cistern.
- c. Original service-pipe conveying the water to the city, previously to 1836.